DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 149 551 EC 103 867

TITLE	Summary of Research Findings on Individualized Education Programs.
INSTITUTION	National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	77
NOTE	17p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Decision Making; *Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Federal Legislation; *Handicapped Children; *Individualized Programs; Parent Role; *Program Planning; Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS	*Education for All Handicapped Children Act

ABSTRACT

Intended for state education agency personnel and others concerned with implementation of P.L. 94-142 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act), the booklet presents summaries and findings of three research projects on individualized education programs (IEPs) and the planning team (PT) process. Reported on are the following three studies: a Connecticut study which focused on levels of participation and levels of satisfaction of PT members, parental role, knowledge of purpose and scope of PT responsibilities, and style of decision making; a Stanford Research Institute study in which 150 IEPs were reviewed and analyzed and 200 interviews with parents, teachers, and administrators were conducted; and Project IEP in which 1,000 individuals were interviewed to identify federal, state, and local relationships, parental role, teacher role, and variables which reduce problems and enhance teacher morale. Cited among findings are that the role of parents in planning team meetings had not yet been defined; that student participation in IEP planning was virtually nonexistent; and that teachers expressed concern that they were being asked to perform tasks (such as instructional assessments) for which they had not been trained. (SBH)

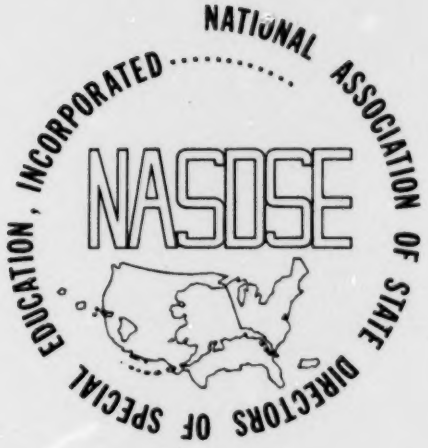
****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED149551

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS ON INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS



Disseminated by

National Association of State Directors
of Special Education

1201 16th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

NASDSE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

EC 10 3867

PREFACE

This booklet is a compilation of summaries and findings of three research projects on Individualized Education Programs and the Planning Team process. The purpose of the booklet is to assist state education agency personnel and all others concerned with the implementation of the IEP process as defined by P.L. 94-142 to better understand the process, and the successes, failures, implications and consequences of the process as delineated by these early national research efforts.

The findings of the three research projects are briefly presented on the following pages. Readers interested in obtaining the complete reports should contact the Principal Investigators or the funding agent for each project.

NASDSE greatly appreciates the cooperation of each of the Principal Investigators and the funding agents in allowing us to disseminate this timely information.

---

*Permission to reproduce and further disseminate this information is expressly granted and encouraged.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
I.	CONNECTICUT STUDY	1
II.	SRI INTERNATIONAL STUDY	3
III.	PROJECT IEP	5
	• Federal, State, Local Relationships	6
	• Parental Role	8
	• Teacher Role	10
	• Variables which Reduce Problems and Enhance Teacher Morale	13

I. CONNECTICUT STUDY

A cooperative study of the Connecticut Department of Education and the U.S. Office of Education, Bureau of Educationfor the Handicapped was conducted during the period of October 1975 and October 1977. Researchers surveyed 1,478 persons, representing 230 Planning Team conferences from a random sample of elementary, junior and senior high schools. The study focused on levels of participation and levels of satisfaction of PT members, parental role, knowledge of purpose and scope of PT responsibilities, and style of decision-making.

Principal Investigators: Kathleen Fenton and Ron Yoshida, BEH.

Findings

- Because most communication of PT decisions to program implementors was done orally rather than in writing, and often by more than one person, communication was haphazard, piecemeal and often confusing
- Special education teachers received more information than regular education teachers prior to the meeting
- Administrators and appraisal personnel dominated meetings
- Teachers tended to play passive roles; felt inhibited by principal's presence and thus had relatively small amount of participation
- Greater the amount of participation in meetings, greater the amount of satisfaction. Thus, teachers were becoming disenchanted with the meetings. An implication was that administrators must find ways of increasing teacher participation
- Most planning team members did not know the full purposes and scope of committee activities. Instructional staff knew less about scope of activities than do administrators and support personnel. Areas of responsibility generally least understood by all role types were programming and evaluation
- Role of parents in planning team meetings not yet defined. Parents were expected to provide information to PT, but not to participate actively in decision-making
- Decisions made by one or two individuals of PT, and not through a group decision-making process

- PT members shared the perception that the special education teacher was the most appropriate person to suggest students' subject matter needs, suggest instructional methods, and to set evaluation criteria

II. SRI INTERNATIONAL STUDY

A total of 150 IEPs were reviewed and analyzed and 200 interviews of parents, teachers and administrators were conducted in 15 local school districts selected from California, Massachusetts and Montana. The study was done by the Educational Policy Research Center of SRI International (formerly Stanford Research Institute) under contract from the Office of Assistant Secretary of Education (Policy Development) during the period October 1976 to September 1977.

Principal Investigators: James D. Marver and Jane L. David

Major Findings

Referral:

- Begins in an informal process (often counselor)
- Teachers usually made referrals in small rural districts
- Other personnel along with teachers made referrals in larger and urban districts

Pre-Placement Preparation:

- Early parent contact (notification) was helpful
- Pre-planning meeting occurred without parents present

Assessment:

- People doing assessment are usually not trained
- Process was usually inadequate
- Adequate guides are not available

IEP Committee:

- Size of committee ranged from 3-15
- Meetings usually occurred before or after school or during lunch (unions didn't like this)

Parent Participation:

- At least one parent was present in 69-90% of cases
- Parents usually made very little contribution
- Greater participation occurred in urban areas

Student Participation:

- Students' participation was virtually non-existent

IEP Plan:

- The plan most often reflected the portion of the day that the child would spend only in special education activities and did not include the regular education portion
- For the most part, there was compliance with state law (the letter of the law). However, the quality (intent of the law) range was great. Plans varied from a simple ditto check sheet to a very sophisticated comprehensive document supported by materials.
- There was a high degree of confusion over writing goals and objectives, especially in an individualized focus. The quality ranged from very vague (the majority) to highly detailed
- Staff said they needed training in IEP process and development
- Staff was afraid of accountability issue even though regulations noted that the IEP was not a legally binding contract on teachers
- Staff was uncertain of how to change plans and build in flexibility
- Time constraints were a major concern

Other:

- The time span was from two weeks to six months from identification to actual placement. Average time was six weeks.
- The letter of the law can be met but the social needs and development of the child can be bypassed.

Bright Side

- More children are being identified and the overall services are better and are improving
- The process of writing plans gives the participants "good feelings"

III. PROJECT IEP

Nero and Associates, Inc. of Roslyn, Virginia conducted interviews of 1,000 persons representative of state education agencies, advocacy groups, parents of handicapped children, and school personnel in 31 urban, rural and suburban settings in four states--Alabama, Wisconsin, New Jersey and Washington. The project was done under contract to the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped during the period December 1976 and May 1977.

The researchers identified four major issues and concerns:

- Federal, state, and local relationships
- Parental role
- Teacher role
- Variables which Reduce Problems and Enhance Teacher Morale

These issues and clarification comments are presented on the following pages.

Principal Investigators: Pat Morrissey, Nancy Safer, BEH.

Federal, State, and Local Relationships

Issue

P.L. 94-142 and recent state legislation are placing increasing emphasis on the regulatory relationships among federal, state, and local educational agencies, thus changing the balance from consultative, technical assistance interactions to monitoring and regulation.

Concerns

Strong apprehensions were expressed by state and local educational agency administrative, support, and instructional personnel that external agencies would exercise authority and responsibility for decisions and monitoring they felt to be their prerogative. They were particularly concerned about:

- interference with programming for individual handicapped children
- development of inflexible standards and processes not responsive to local needs and conditions
- interpretation of standards set by external agencies as maximum, not minimum, criteria for programs, and
- teachers being held liable for the failure of children to attain specified goals and objectives.

Clarification

Concerns related to monitoring by external agencies may stem from the lack of differentiation between substantive and procedural review. Substantive review refers to the specific content of an IEP document, whereas procedural review refers to the IEP process. It was felt that substantive review should be primarily the responsibility of local educational agencies. Procedural review should be the shared responsibility of local, state, and federal agencies. The execution of responsibility for monitoring of procedural compliance will necessarily differ with agency level in terms of frequency and comprehensiveness of monitoring. Consistency across agencies in criteria for procedural monitoring is, however, imperative.

Attitudes toward standardization reflect concerns that rigid roles, procedures, and forms will be specified by external agencies. General agreement exists that there is a need for minimal standards to be developed. It was felt that P.L. 94-142 was sufficiently specific in defining participants, procedures, and elements of the IEP. Wide variations in state and local conditions, such as staffing patterns, should be considered in the development

of standards. Given the potentially suppressive effects of standards, it may be necessary to provide technical assistance and incentives to local educational agencies in order to encourage optimal programming for handicapped children.

Concerns related to teacher liability for the progress of a handicapped child appear to be resolved in the proposed regulation (Section 121a. 220-226). The legacy of federal, state, and local agency relationships has traditionally been oriented to a consultative rather than a regulatory emphasis. Though both purposes represent the nature of these relationships, the changing balance toward greater regulatory responsibility is causing new strain on old relationships. Change will require a sensitive posture to be assumed by external agencies in exercising greater demands for accountability. The Bureau and SEAs will have to emphasize their "partnership role" and provide support while new accountability procedures are implemented.

The Parental Role

Issue

P.L. 94-142 and recent state legislation are changing the extent and nature of home/school relationships.

Concerns

Concern was expressed by school personnel and parents about the skills each has for effectively participating in the IEP process.

- School personnel believe that educational program development should be left to the professional educator and that parents do not have the skills necessary for this activity
- Parents feel that they can provide significant information about their child's background and school history releant to the development of an educational program. Further, they believe they should have an important role in reviewing the IEP. Most parents, however, agreed that the specification of goals, objectives, and instructional methods is best done by professional educators.
- Parents and school personnel expressed concern that educators rely heavily on educational jargon which is noncommunicative to parents
- Parents and school personnel felt that parents usually lack the knowledge and confidence to effectively question committee recommendations

Concern was expressed by school personnel that for some cases, the costs of notification and consent procedures outweigh the potential benefits of parental participation.

- Scheduling meetings for working parents may result in after school or evening sessions
- Obtaining consent from parents may in some instances result in diminishing current direct services, since instructional and support personnel would have to make home visits.
- A delay in providing services might result while formal notification and consent procedures are being implemented.

Clarification

Concern over parental participation f r developing the educational program reflects a lack of communication rather than a basic disagreement between parents and educators. Essentially, both groups agree that parents have valuable input related to their child's background and school history and that parents should review school program recommendations. There is also agreement, with the exception of few parents, that specific educational goals, objectives and instructional methods should be determined by professional educators.

School personnel and parents recognize the difficulties currently characterizing home/school communication. Both agree that there is imperative need for training of school personnel and parents in this area. Further, parents and advocacy groups suggested that it would be beneficial if parents had access to trained advocates who could accompany them to meetings and explain to them critical aspects of the process.

Notification and consent procedures are a critical procedural safeguard for parents. However, under certain circumstances, school personnel encounter an unusual burden in providing notification and/or obtaining consent. Regulations should be sensitive to the need for allowing flexibility in procedures for providing notification and obtaining consent.

The Role of the Teacher

Issue

P.L. 94-142 and recent state legislation are changing the role and status of teachers.

Concerns

Concerns were expressed by teachers about ever increasing demands on their time for non-instructional activities which may detract from their potentially productive time instructing students, such as:

- increased time at pupil planning meetings
- increased time spent in clerical tasks completing forms, and
- increased time spent in formally documenting plans beyond their instructional utility

Teachers expressed concern that they were being asked to perform tasks for which they had not been trained, such as:

- performing formal and informal instructional assessments
- developing annual goals and short-term objectives
- teachers and directors stated that learning to project goals and objectives for a specific period of time and matching appropriate materials with goals and objectives tended to cause teachers the most problems
- participating in group pupil planning process
- managing individualized classroom instruction
- communicating with parents

Concern was expressed that the enactment of IEP provisions of P.L. 94-142 is, in essence, an expression of lack of faith in the ability of our nation's teachers to effectively educate handicapped children.

- Formal specification of goals, objectives, services, and methods is not required of teachers of nonhandicapped children, and
- The teacher accountability implied by the IEP is not required of teachers of nonhandicapped children

Long Range Negative Implications

Changes in the teaching role e.g., less time for direct instruction of children because of increased non-instructional tasks; shared responsibility for classroom activities; increased accountability to outsiders must be considered in terms of their effect on job satisfaction and feelings of personal fulfillment amont teachers. Changes perceived negatively by teachers might result in lowered morale, dissatisfaction, and ultimately, in a rapid turnover rate.

Planning Time

Type	Time	Analysis
New Referral	5-6 1/2 hours	2-3 hours for assessment 1-2 hours goals and objectives 1/2 hour arranging conference 1-1 1/2 hours in the conference
Current Student	2-4 hours	2 hours assessment 1/2 hour goals and objectives 1/2 hour arranging conference 1 hour in the conference
Preschool Student	5 hours	Davis, F. Planning Time: Summary of preschool individualized education programs. Unpublished manuscript, 1977. Available from CONNECT, 1-A North Progress Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17109

Bright Side

Many teachers reported that the IEP process was a valuable aid in their role, requiring them to think about and analyze their teaching and actually saved them time during the year in planning lessons. Assessments focused their attention on the child, and writing goals and objectives structured their thinking about where they were going during the year.

Those teachers also found systematic recordkeeping useful in motivating pupils. They reported that objectives written in measurable terms and shared with students caused students to enjoy evaluating their own daily or weekly progress toward that objective and to strive to improve their performance.

Clarification

Universally, it was felt that teachers need inservice retraining to carry out their role in IEP process. Although participants agreed to the need for massive inservice education, they were unable to specify the areas and content of such training. Effective inservice will require a needs

assessment in order to appropriately design and provide relevant training opportunities.

It is worth noting that teachers of handicapped children interpreted the provisions of the IEP process as a negative reaction to their previous efforts and commitments to the education of handicapped children. The IEP process was felt to be an expression of lack of confidence in their professional judgment. As IEP procedures are developed, sensitivity should be given to such feelings among teachers.

In districts where the IEP conference is seen by all involved as cooperative, problem solving sessions rather than checks on the teacher, there is hope that teacher's experiences and perspectives will be positive. On the other hand, in districts where an atmosphere of distrust prevails among staff members or between parents and school personnel, teachers may indeed feel they are being put on the defensive.

Variables Which Reduce Problems and Enhance Teacher Morale

- Process of implementing change
- Administrative support and a feedback system
- Teacher tenure and training

Discussion

- Process of Implementing Change
  - involvement of teachers from the beginning in planning for the implementation of IEPs (analysis of needed changes, recommending strategies for change in district policies, procedures, responsibilities, and forms, design of inservice training needed
  - inservice training must be an integral part of the special education program. Workshops should be held on a regular basis, about twice a month after school. Topics selected by teachers and teachers proficient in particular skill areas often plan and conduct the workshops
- Administrative Support and a Feedback System
  - provision of assessment systems; sequences of objectives; adequate materials cross-referenced to objectives; logical standardized forms; orders; and consultative assistance
- Teacher Tenure and Training
  - If majority of teachers had teacher training, i.e., received college training in last five years, and preservice training emphasized diagnostic/prescriptive approach to special education combined with elements of precision or data based instruction, the IEP process was generally not a problem
  - Findings suggest that once an efficient IEP process is underway that it tends to be instructionally relevant to at least those teachers who favor a diagnostic/prescriptive precision or behavioral approach to teaching